

BEHIND THE SCENES IN BEAUTY-LAND WITH FLORENZ ZIEGFELD; PASSING OF THE STAGE-DOOR JOHNNY AND THE MODERN GIRL

SOCIETY GIRL NOW OFTEN MORE DARING THAN CHORUS BEAUTY

Stage Girl of Today Far Superior to the Type Twenty Years Ago, Asserts Florenz Ziegfeld, the Famous Arbiter of Pulchritude; What Used to Happen When Oil Kings Came to Town. Defines and Tells Why Stage-Door Johnny Has Passed.

IN this remarkable series of articles by Florenz Ziegfeld, world famous theatrical producer, the real truth about the American chorus beauty is revealed for the first time. Mr. Ziegfeld was persuaded to write only when convinced that the public was dwelling under completely erroneous delusions regarding a type of popular entertainer much in the public eye.

Previous articles have told where the chorus beauties come from, how they are selected for their jobs, how they keep beautiful and the secrets of their fascination for the tired business man. It is the author's contention that the American stage has steadily increased in modesty and that the chorus beauty of today is the exponent of charm through personality and vivacity and not through mere sex appeal.

The articles constitute what is probably the most authoritative treatise on feminine beauty ever presented to the public. They will continue for several weeks in The Sunday Washington Times.

The Passing of the Johnny

By FLORENZ ZIEGFELD, Jr.

Acknowledged Arbiter of Feminine Beauty.

TWENTY years ago in New York City a theatrical man made a wager with a friend that the ten best known chorus beauties of the city would be still sleeping at three in the afternoon on any day when there was not a matinee.

"I'll bet they've all been out on gay parties the night before," he said, "and will not come to the telephone."

To settle the wager, they telephoned one Friday afternoon, with the following results: All ten, word came, were asleep and could not be disturbed.

A few months ago the same two men, recalling their wager, tried the same experiment with the ten most popular beauties of the 1921 stage in New York. The results were different. None of the ten were asleep. Six were at their dancing master's; two were shopping with their mothers, and two were downtown taking music lessons.

And there you have in a nutshell the difference between the chorus girls of the last generation and those of the present day. The former lived largely for a good time. The latter are ambitious, studious and businesslike. Let me tell you a story which will illustrate the chorus beauty's attitude in those days of Stage-door Johnnies.

JOHNNIES BROKE UP OLD-TIME REHEARSALS.

One brisk winter morning some fifteen or eighteen years ago, a certain theatrical manager walked into his theater on Broadway, New York, and came pretty near to tearing his hair at the sight which awaited him on the dimly lighted stage. For there, instead of the eight chorus beauties who comprised his then famous dancing octette, was only one. She was waiting patiently for the manager and his director, both of whom were a few minutes late.

"Where are the rest?" asked the bewildered manager.

"Harry Thaw's come to town," the sole remaining beauty replied, "and they've all gone off shopping together!"

"No, don't tell me they've gone and done that again!" the distracted manager wailed; "why! they promised they never would. How the devil do they think we're going to run off a show here if those cursed stage door Johnnies keep breaking up rehearsals? Tell me, did he take all seven of them?"

"Yes, sir; they all got in a big machine and went off to Fifth Avenue. Personally, I think it's getting to be awful, sir."

The only reliable member of the beauty octette was right; it was getting to be awful. The manager knew it too, and because he and other managers knew it and came to realize the vital importance of it to the stage, a great revolution occurred in the profession of beauty. From then on, the sinister character known popularly as the stage door Johnny was doomed to a rapid extinction.

Now, lots of people do not know that the Stage Door Johnny has passed. They still associate with chorus beauties the dashing figure of a wealthy young blood, clad in the latest mode, bouquet in hand, waiting eagerly at the rear or side entrance of a theater. They take it for granted that chorus girls are a fast set, never happy unless they are flying off on some giddy joy ride to a gay cafe where champagne is secretly uncorked and a general wild orgy ensues.

This simply is not true of the modern chorus beauty. To hold such a belief is unfair to an eminently respectable, hardworking class of American girlhood, and it is with particular pleasure that I take this opportunity to confute any such ridiculous notion.

The story of the passing of the Stage Door Johnny is also the story

SOCIETY GIRL WHO HAS JOINED CHORUS

Beatrice Milner, once an English society belle, has become an American chorus beauty and is a typical example of the higher types now on the stage who have done so much to eliminate the "Stage-Door Johnnies" who in former years pestered the girls of the chorus with unwelcome attentions.

Bold, indeed, must be the man who would dare to loiter at the stage door entrance to accost this patrician beauty whose wealth and social position are two barriers, but whose self-respect, modesty, culture and refinement are even more effectual in halting approaches by strange admirers.

LEADING FAMILIES OF SOUTH SENDING GIRLS TO CHORUS

Puritanical Ideas of Public Concerning Stage Folk Not Confined to Provincial Towns.—Bigoted Brooklyn Landlady Shows Some of Unjust Handicaps That Confront Honest and Industrious Play-World People Who Seek Respectable Homes.

Miss South, too, has that personality and grace born of a well-developed social training. I am told that she comes of a prominent Tennessee family of wealth and social prestige.

In spite of her arduous stage work—for the life of the chorus beauty, as I have said repeatedly, requires zealous perseverance to her art—Miss South manages to find time each winter to fly to Palm Beach and rest a bit with her society friends.

Also from the South is Miss Janet Megrew, the Washington society girl. As one of the "Butterfly Girls" in "Sally," she has won her way to the admiration of many thousands.

DAYS OF THE "NOTE" HAVE GONE FOREVER.

It is obvious that with girls of this newer type of education, breeding and culture holding the limelight, there can be no crude stage door Johnny business around the modern theater. The day of addressing a note to "The Third From the Right" or "The Tall Blonde on the End" and expecting it to reach a certain girl in the chorus line is long since over.

Some people have thought that we are unduly strict about this sort of thing. Some think that after the chorus beauties leave the stage it is none of the theatrical manager's business whether they meet a millionaire's son for dinner or go home with their girl chums. Nevertheless, I have never tolerated and never will permit anyone to loiter near the stage entrance of the theaters where our performances are taking place.

We want none of the stage door Johnny—not even the guileless-looking college boy type. The new profession of beauty is a serious, business-like profession. We pay girls well and we expect from them strict attention to the business of providing the public with artistic entertainment. For frivolity we have no use. My stage-door at-

cases of emergency, such as the holding of a convention in the city, to apply even at private houses.

What have been the results? In many cases the mere mention of "chorus girls" has caused the door to be slammed in the face of the questioner. It has taken a detailed house-to-house canvass to secure lodgings for perfectly reputable young women who are in every way as fit to mingle in respectable society as any other women who work for a living.

BIGOTRY NOT CONFINED SOLELY TO SMALL TOWN.

I must confess that this puritanical bigotry is not confined to the small towns or even to the cities outside of New York. One of the most unjust attitudes ever taken toward chorus beauties was displayed only recently by a Brooklyn landlady in whose boarding house a well-known New York show girl had been living with her invalid mother for several months.

By some remarkable freak of nature the landlady had failed to ask this beauty where she was employed. The girl, very businesslike and dignified, had kept to her own affairs like the perfect lady that she is and had never mentioned the fact that she was connected with a theater in any capacity. She left the house every day at noon and did not return till midnight, minding her own business and devoting herself to waiting on her mother when she was home.

It happened that one day the beauty's mother was confined to her room with some slight ailment and required assistance in taking her medicine. In a quandary, the girl turned to the landlady:

"Would you mind looking in on mother at 8 and at 10 tonight?" she asked, and then added her explanation:

"I may be late in leaving the theater tonight."

"The theater, did you say?" queried the landlady in icy tones. "Why do you go to the theater when your mother is ill?"

"Why, I'm not going to see a show," laughed the girl, "of course I wouldn't go if I didn't have to. But, you see, I'm in the show. I'm in the chorus."

The landlady's face registered an expression of grim horror and the girl fled from the house fearfully upset. Upon her return that evening she found pinned to her door a note which only too clearly confirmed her suspicions.

"You have been staying in this house under false pretenses," was the message of this woman who lives in the twentieth century, "and I shall have to have your room at the end of the week."

SOCIETY GIRLS ENTER IN THE COMPETITION.

I will tell you another reason why the stage-door Johnny passed as rapidly as he did, and why, accordingly, the dignity of the chorus beauty's profession has risen to its present generally accepted heights—Brooklyn landladies and "Main Street" lodging houses notwithstanding. Long ago the great rival for the attention of a stage-door Johnny—the smart society girl—began to worry about Johnny spending so much of his time with the old-time chorus beauties.

The society girl, in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and every city in between, deliberately set out to study the reasons for the chorus beauties' popularity. She found that it attracted this type of men to be gay, and the more daring society girls thereupon began to grow less conventional.

They began to smoke. They took to the cocktail. They took up eagerly the latest dance indiscretions from Paris. They showed their pique at chorus beauties in the very cut of their clothes. So that today what is the result?

Nowadays, as everyone knows, the society girl sometimes is "faster," more sophisticated, infinitely more daring than her sister on the stage.

No, the stage-door Johnny has long since departed from the theatrical world, and if he survives at all—as some people affirm—he is likely to be reincarnated in the form of the gay young blood who hangs on at our wealthy country houses, sporting clubs and dances of the rich. For I am sure that this gentleman does no longer seek the favor of the chorus beauty.

How do chorus beauties dictate the styles to modish American women?

How did the extreme short skirt originate?

Who starts the freak fads like the ankle bracelet and the swagger stick for girls?

These and many other questions will be answered in Mr. Ziegfeld's next article, entitled "How Beauty Sets the Styles"—a discussion which will be of particular interest to women. It will appear in next Sunday's Washington Times.

No Longer Can "Stage-Door Johnnies" Send Notes to "First on Left" or "Third on Right" in This Self-Respecting Chorus of Modern Day Beauties.

answer which, if you remember, O. Henry wrote a delightful short story.

Well, like the "man about town," the Stage Door Johnny was sometimes a bouncer, sometimes just a plain young fool. Some times he was an old fool and often he was downright vicious. The type always including a sprinkling of millionaires who would get the chorus beauties into fearfully extravagant habits of living. The great majority of the rest had much more money than brains and were of the kind that pestered a girl most annoyingly with their silly attention.

CHORUS GIRLS WERE ONLY FOR DECORATION.

You must remember that at this time the average chorus girl was of no more importance to the actual performance of the play than parsley sprigs are to the enjoyment of a planked steak. They were decorations; nothing more. Many of the less reputable of the managers, it must be admitted, tolerated the girls on their payrolls simply as a sort of advertising attraction for this very class of Stage Door Johnny patronage to which I have referred. Indeed, some of them, it is known, actually encouraged flirtations and gay escapades begun at the stage door—the great wrong of which they could not grasp until their pocketbooks subsequently affected.

I suppose that \$25 a week, at this particular time, was considered a high salary. Not all girls got that. They were struggling

to exist on this pay and advance their profession at the same time—and it was a terrible task.

Could the beauty of those days really be blamed if she accepted luncheon and dinner engagements from the stage door Johnny? With her it was often a case of getting enough to eat. She had expensive clothes to buy and might be ordered on the road at any moment, with no larger pay to compensate her for the extra personal expenses involved in traveling.

I recall a pathetic instance of those days which will give you a graphic conception of the poverty striking beauty. It is a thing which could not happen today.

JOHNNIES HAD POWER WITH THE MANAGERS.

Some twenty years ago a young girl came on from California to New York—the city of her dreams. She was a girl with that rare sort of beauty which enchants at first sight. She struck the metropolis with a high heart, high ideals and a lot of ambition. Seventy-eight dollars in a chamois bag under her dress was all the money she had in the world.

Making the rounds of the theatrical managers' offices, applying for a job in the chorus, it took three weeks for this rare beauty to land a position. (They did not know how to play up beauty effectively in those days. Nowadays this same girl would have been snapped up eagerly by the first producer who saw her.) And her pay was \$22 per week, out of which she

was compelled to purchase shoes, stockings and tights used in the comedy.

This girl, then, had to clothe herself for off stage, pay for her room and board and all other expenses, out of a net income of probably \$17 or \$18 per week, which was not conducive to beauty maintenance. And besides paying her own expenses, she proved she was made of the stuff that heroines are made of—for she sent money home regularly to her aged parents in the West.

Well, it was hard work, but it was a labor of love with her, and all went well until a certain notorious society millionaire, who haunted the theatrical district, fell in love with her looks.

The philanderer had seen the little Western beauty in the chorus one night, and made up his mind to meet her, and forthwith started a siege of flowers, candy, perfumes and notes imploring her to dine with him. All of these she refused, much to the amusement of the other girls, although I happen to know that there were many times when she walked uptown two miles or more after the show in order to save car fare and send that much more home.

Now, it is a matter of unfortunate record that the stage door Johnny in these days sometimes could wield influence with a weak-kneed manager, and this is exactly what happened in this case. Angered at her repulses, the millionaire roused schemed to have her discharged from her position in the chorus, and although he must have known that it might blight the girl's career, he persevered until he was successful,

The rare beauty from the California town, who had fairly and squarely conquered Broadway on sheer merit, was defeated because of a pernicious system of stage-door Johnnies.

BEAUTY STOOD IN WAY IN HER STRUGGLES.

I will skip the story of this girl's discouraging struggles in New York at that time. Her beauty made her many enemies and many would-be friends. Indeed, it was probably her very beauty that stood in her way, for time after time, from restaurants where she had gotten a job as waitress and from barber shops where she manicured for a living, she was finally dropped.

It is refreshing to learn, therefore, as I did only the other day, that this girl—now a woman—has succeeded in establishing in one of our largest cities of the West a flourishing millinery business which pays her a handsome income. She is married now and has two handsome boys—boys, I warrant, who will never be found hanging around a stage door entrance waiting to greet some beauty of the chorus. Their mother knows too well the danger of that now fortunately obsolete institution—Stage-Door Johnnies.

What a marked contrast these days of low wages and no recognition make with those of today?

Today the chorus beauty is economically independent. She has neither need nor desire for a Stage Door Johnny to buy her suppers.

Her salary ranges today from \$40 to \$100 a week. She is paid part

salary while rehearsing—an unheard of thing twenty years ago. When she goes on the road she is apt to be paid more than when in a long "stand" in a single city. And she is treated as a laborer worthy of her hire. Moreover, as I have pointed out in a previous article, the chorus beauty can add rapidly to her salary.

HIGHER TYPE NOW HAS DISPLACED FORMER BEAUTY.

Do not wonder, then, that a new and higher type of chorus beauty has come to displace the old style of kicking chorus girl, who was merely a garnishing to the musical comedy dish. The better-educated, better-bred girl is continually entering the chorus as a professional.

For instance, there is the beautiful Beatrice Milner, a Follies girl whose early education was gained in one of those well-known inaccessible seminaries for young women near London. She comes from an English family prominent in society abroad. After her schooling she broached to her parents the idea of entering upon a stage career.

They would not hear of it, I understand. But this is the day of independence and self-reliance, and Miss Milner determined to follow out her natural inclination. One day she left England, sailed for America, and was in New York city when I had the good fortune to discover her. Struck with her beauty, I engaged her on the spot.

Then there is the case of Miss Mona South, a well-known beauty of Broadway's chorus sorority.

